

Message Text

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S/S-O:FWISNER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 056981

NODIS

-STADIS/CHEROKEE

FOLLOWING REPEAT AMMAN 2110 ACTION SECSTATE MAR 05.

QUOTE: S E C R E T AMMAN 2110

NODIS CHEROKEE

STADIS

FOR INR-SAUNDERS ONLY FROM ATHERTON

U.S. DEL. NO. 59

E.O.11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PGOV, XF, US

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS STRATEGY

REF: STATE 54290

SECRET

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1. WE HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO DO SOME THINKING
ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STRATEGY YOU OUTLINE
IN REFTEL FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. WASHINGTON IS
OBVIOUSLY IN THE BEST POSITION TO JUDGE THE
REQUIREMENTS OF TIMING OUR MOVES ON THE MIDDLE EAST
SO THAT THEY DO NOT RUN AT CROSS PURPOSES WITH OTHER
FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES. I NEVERTHELESS HAVE SOME
CONCERN ABOUT THE EFFECT THAT A POSTPONEMENT OF
COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE ISRAELIS ON THE ESSENTIAL
ISSUES WILL HAVE ON OUR OVERALL ABILITY TO

MOVE FORWARD LATER IN THE SPRING/EARLY SUMMER.
I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE SECRETARY AND YOU AND
YOUR GROUP ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE FACTORS
IN THIS RESPECT AS I SEE THEM. IN ADDITION I BELIEVE
THERE MAY BE AN ELEMENT OF INTERNAL INCONSISTENCY IN
THE APPROACH OUTLINED IN THE STRATEGY PAPER AS IT
NOW STANDS. AT ANY RATE OUR OWN ATTEMPT TO
THINK THE MATTER THROUGH LEADS US TO A SOMEWHAT
DIFFERENC CONCLUSION ABOUT HOW WE CAN BEST PROCEED
IN THE IMMEDIATE PERIOD AHEAD.

2. I THINK WE WOULD ALL AGREE THAT OUR MAIN CONCERN
WITH THE PROPOSED STRATEGY IS THE EFFECT IT IS LIKELY
TO HAVE ON SADAT'S CONFIDENCE IN OUR DETERMINATION
TO PUSH THROUGH THE NECESSARY DECISIONS WITH ISRAEL.
HE HAS SEEN US TALK MANY TIMES ABOUT GOING TO THE
BRINK WITH THE ISRAELIS ONLY TO BACK AWAY AT THE
LAST MINUTE. IT WAS EVIDENT FROM OUR CONVERSATION
WITH HIM ON MARCH 1 THAT HE HAS FIRMLY IN MIND THE
PRESIDENT'S COMMITMENT--MADE TO SADAT, IT IS IMPORTANT
TO REMEMBER, WHILE HIS KEY ADVISORS WERE PRESENT--THAT
WE WOULD "MOVE IN THE MIDDLE OF MARCH." FOR SADAT
TO BE TOLD NOW THAT UPON REFLECTION WE HAVE DECIDED
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THE MARCH TIMING IS NOT RIGHT AFTER ALL BUT THAT FOR SURE
WE ARE GOING TO DO IT TWO MONTHS LATER WILL, I
AM VERY CONCERNED, STRAIN HIS PATIENCE WITH AND
CONFIDENCE IN THE U.S. CLOSE TO THE BREAKING
POINT. HE MAY NOT HAVE AN IMMEDIATE ALTERNATIVE
TO GO TO, BUT IN THOSE INTERVENING TWO MONTHS STATEMENTS
MAY WELL BE MADE AND ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN THAT COULD
HAVE THE EFFECT OF REDUCING HIS FLEXIBILITY AND
HIS RESPONSIVENESS WHEN WE ARE FINALLY READY TO
PUSH HARD FOR A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE NEGOTIATIONS.
HIS ISOLATION IN THE ARAB WORLD, AND THE CRITICISM HE IS
BEGINNING TO GET FROM ALL SIDES, ALREADY KEENLY
FELT BY HIM AND HIS ADVISORS AS WAS MADE
PLAIN TO ME ON MY LAST VISIT, CAN ONLY BE
EXACERBATED BY A FURTHER HOLDING PERIOD. MOREOVER,
THE REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED, APPARENTLY RELIABLE, THAT
SADAT HAS PUT OUT FEELERS FOR A RAPPROCHEMENT
WITH THE SOVIETS MUST BE TAKEN AS AN INDICATION
THAT HE HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO THINK OF THE
POSSIBILITY--EVEN THE LIKELIHOOD PERHAPS--THAT
WE WILL PROVE UNABLE TO DELIVER FOR HIM.

3. AT THE MINIMUM, IF WE ARE TO PERSUADE SADAT
TO TAKE A FURTHER CHANCE ON OUR INTENTIONS AND GO INTO A
HOLDING PATTERN FOR ANOTHER TWO MONTHS, WE WILL HAVE
TO BE HIGHLY CONVINCING IN WHAT WE SAY TO HIM.
GERNERAL ASSURANCES OF THE TYPE THAT WE

HAVE CONVEYED IN THE PAST WILL NOT BE ENOUGH
ON THIS OCCASION; I BELIEVE WE WILL HAVE
TO GIVE HIM A COMMITMENT AS TO WHAT WE ARE
PREPARED TO DO AND WHEN, IN QUITE SPECIFIC TERMS,
AND THAT IT WILL HAVE TO HAVE THE PRESIDENT'S
AUTHORITY BEHIND IT. HIGHLY AS I REGARD MY OWN
POWERS OF PERSUASION, REMARKS BY ME ALONE ARE
NOT GOING TO DO THE TRICK. I BELIEVE THE
EXPLANATION MUST COME IN A PRESIDENTIAL LETTER,
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PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE COMMITMENT GIVEN AT
CAMP DAVID. IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT FOR
SUCH A LETTER TO BE DELIVERED TO SADAT BEFORE THE
BEGIN VISIT.

4. IF WE ARE TO DECIDE WE CANNOT AFFORD TO
FORCE THE PACE ON THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
AT THIS TIME AND THEREFORE DEFER TABLING OUR
OWN COMPROMISE DRAFT (MORE ON THIS BELOW), WE
FACE THE PROBLEM, AS THE STRATEGY PAPER
RECOGNIZES, OF HOW TO MAINTAIN AN APPEARANCE OF
ACTIVITY IN THE INTERIM. TO ME THE IDEA OF
GOING INTO A QUESTION-AND-ANSWER EXERCISE IS
HIGHLY CONTRIVED AND WILL IMMEDIATELY BE SEEN AS A
DISINGENUOUS STALLING TACTIC BY THE EGYPTIANS.
IT WILL ALSO ADD TO THE ALREADY STRONG
SKEPTICISM ABOUT OUR INTENTIONS IN JORDAN
(AND PRESUMABLY IN SAUDI ARABIA) AND WILL GIVE
FURTHER AMMUNITION TO SADAT'S CRITICS IN THE
ARAB WORLD. WE WILL DO BETTER TO LEVEL WITH
SADAT AS TO THE REASON FOR THE DELAY. IN ANY
CASE, FOR OUR LAST STOPS IN CAIRO AND JERUSALEM
BEFORE THE BEGIN VISIT, WE DO NOT NEED TO RESORT TO
SUCH A DEVICE. THE EGYPTIANS HAVE AGREED TO PRESENT
US WITH A COUNTERPROPOSAL TO THE LATEST ISRAELI
DRAFT, AND WHEN WE GET TO JERUSALEM WE CAN
HAND IT OVER AND DISCUSS IT. NEITHER SIDE EXPECTS
US TO DO MORE THAN THIS JUST AT THE MOMENT.

5. RETURNING TO THE BROADER QUESTION OF THE
IMPACT OF THE STRATEGY YOU OUTLINE, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY A
FEW WORDS ABOUT THE ISRAELI SIDE OF THE EQUATION.
YOU SPEAK OF "THE REALITIES OF ISRAELI POLITICS"
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AS ONE OF THE FACTORS COMMENDING DELAY. THIS
IS NOT SPELLED OUT, BUT THE IMPLICATION SEEMS TO
BE THAT LATE APRIL OR MAY IS GOING TO BE A MORE OPPORTUNE
TIME, FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE ISRAELI POLITICAL

SITUATION, TO PRESS FOR THE DECISIONS WE NEED. I THINK WE MUST LOOK HARD AT THIS ASSUMPTION, IF INDEED IT LIES BEHIND THIS PART OF THE STRATEGY PAPER. FROM MY EXPERIENCE THERE IS REALLY NEVER A GOOD TIME TO PRESS ISRAEL FOR DECISIONS. THERE IS A PROCESS OF FERMENT UNDERWAY IN ISRAELI POLITICAL LIFE AT PRESENT AND WE OF COURSE WANT IT TO DEVELOP FURTHER. BUT WE MUST RECOGNIZE IT IS HAPPENING LARGELY BECAUSE THE U.S. HAS TAKEN FIRM POSITIONS ON SEVERAL ISSUES IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS AND A SEGMENT OF ISRAELI OPINION HAS BEGUN TO REALIZE THAT TO MAINTAIN MAXIMAL HARDLINE POSITIONS ISRAEL COULD PAY A HIGH PRICE IN TERMS OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH AMERICA. BEGIN'S CRITICS WERE PRACTICALLY SILENT UNTIL THE DANGER OF A U.S.-ISRAEL PARTING OF THE WAYS BECAME APPARENT.

6. THERE IS A REAL RISK THAT A HIATUS OF THE KIND WE NOW HAVE IN MIND WILL CAUSE THIS PROCESS OF FERMENT TO SUBSIDE, AND PUBLIC OPINION IN ISRAEL TO COALESCE ONCE AGAIN AROUND BEGIN. IT IS ONLY HUMAN NATURE TO WANT YOUR CAKE AND HAVE IT TOO IF NO ONE SEEMS TO OBJECT TO YOUR DOING SO, AND ISRAELIS CAN ONLY BE EXPECTED TO ADMIRE A LEADER WHO SEEMS TO BE GETTING AWAY WITH IT. BOTH SIDES EXPECT US TO PUT FORWARD OUR OWN PROPOSAL ON THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES SOMETIME IN THE NEAR FUTURE, NOT BECAUSE I HAVE SAID WE WOULD, BUT BECAUSE THEY, LIKE OURSELVES, SEE THIS AS THE ONLY LOGICAL WAY THE IMPASSE ON THE PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE CAN BE OVERCOME. IF WE FOREBEAR DOING THIS
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FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD AT THIS JUNCTURE, THE ISRAELIS WILL SEE IT AS A VICTORY FOR THEIR TOUGH STANCE AND CONFIRMATION THAT WHEN THE CRUNCH COMES, THE U.S. WILL BACK OFF RATHER THAN PRESS THE ISSUE--THE OBVERSE, IN OTHER WORDS, OF THE EROSION OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR INTENTIONS WE STAND TO EXPERIENCE ON THE EGYPTIAN SIDE. A FURTHER POINT IS THAT PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF IMPATIENCE THAT ARE LIKELY TO EMANATE FROM THE EGYPTIANS DURING THIS PERIOD UNDER THE STRAIN OF THE HIATUS WILL ALMOST SURELY HARDEN ATTITUDES IN ISRAEL AND DISCOURAGE DEBATE AND CRITICISM OF BEGIN.

7. I WONDER, FURTHERMORE, IF IT IS REALISTIC TO THINK THAT DELAYING TABLING OUR PROPOSAL FOR A DECLARATION WILL IN ITSELF KEEP THE LID ON IN U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS. IF THE PRESIDENT

TALKS FRANKLY TO BEGIN ABOUT WHERE WE THINK
ISRAEL'S POSITION HAS TO CHANGE (THE ASWAN
PALESTINIAN FORMULA; APPLICABILITY OF RESOLUTION 242
PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL TO WEST BANK/GAZA WITH
COROLLARY IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS
THERE; FREEZE ON SETTLEMENTS), THIS WILL IN ITSELF
PRECIPITATE PUBLIC DEBATE BETWEEN US. I CAN SEE MERIT
IN PHASED ESCALATION OF WHAT DEBATE -- I.E., ALLOWING
TIME FOR BEGIN TO RETURN TO ISRAEL AND TO CHEW ALL THIS OVER
IN THE DOMESTIC ARENA, TABLING OUR DRAFT DECLARATION A
COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER, AS WELL AS PRESSING FOR INTERIM
WEST BANK/GAZA GUIDELINES CONSISTENT WITH RESOLUTION 242
SOON THEREAFTER--ALL THE WHILE AVOIDING CONFRONTATION OVER
ISSUES ON WHICH BEGIN COULD RALLY BROAD SUPPORT AROUND HIMSELF,
E.G., INTERRUPTION OF ARMS SUPPLY PIPELINE, PLO PARTICIPA-
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TION, OR RENEWED U.S.-SOVIET MIDDLE EAST EFFORTS. TO
DEFER EVEN BEGINNING DEBATE AND FORCING THE PACE IN
APRIL, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO ME TO RUN SERIOUS RISKS
ON THE ARAB SIDE.

8. IF WE IN EFFECT PUT THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES IN
THE ICEBOX FOR SIX WEEKS OR TWO MONTHS, I ALSO SEE
DIFFICULTY IN CONSTRUCTING A RATIONALE FOR A FURTHER MISSION
BY ME TO THE AREA DURING THIS PERIOD. THE EGYPTIANS WILL
DRAW BACK FROM THEIR INCIPIENT WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS
WEST BANK/GAZA ISSUES AND SIMPLY WAIT FOR US TO MOVE ON
THE DECLARATION. THEY ARE ALSO NOT LIKELY, IN THESE CIR-
CUMSTANCES, TO BE WILLING TO ALLOW THE TALKS IN
THE MILITARY COMMITTEE TO RESUME.

9. I AM LEFT WITH THE CONVICTION THAT IT MAY BE
A MISTAKE TO DEFER TOO LONG PUTTING FORWARD OUR OWN
PROPOSAL FOR A DRAFT DECLARATION. TO DO SO
FOR THE LENGTH OF TIME ENVISAGED WOULD RUN THE
RISK OF UNRAVELLING WHAT WE HAVE THUS FAR
ACCOMPLISHED, AND WORSE, OF CAUSING A SERIOUS
LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN U.S. INTENTIONS, NOT ONLY
IN EGYPT BUT IN JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA AS WELL.
SAYING THIS I WANT TO EMPHASIZE I AM NOT TRYING
TO GAIN SAY WASHINGTON'S SENSE OF THE TIMEING
BY WHICH WE CAN BEST PRESS MATTERS TO CONCLUSION,
BUT IT SEEMS TO ME PREFERABLE TO PUT OUR
PROPOSAL FORWARD SOONER RATHER THAN LATER, EVEN IF
WE HAVE TO EXPLAIN TO THE EGYPTIANS THAT WE DO NOT
INTEND, FOR VARIOUS COGENT REASONS, TO PRESS ISRAELI
ACCEPTANCE OF OUR FORMULA UNTIL LATER ON. IF THEY
HAVE SOME VISIBLE PROOF, AS IT WERE, OF OUR
ULTIMATE INTENTIONS I BELIEVE THE EGYPTIANS (AND
OTHER ARABS) WILL BE MORE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR
NEED FOR THE RIGHT TIMING TO PRESS THE ISSUE TO

CONCLUSION, BOTH FROM THE STANDPOINT OF OUR
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OWN CONCERNS AS WELL AS THE NEED FOR CABINET
DEBATE AND A CONSENSUS TO DEVELOP AROUND THE PROPOSAL
WITHIN ISRAEL.

10. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES A SUBSEQUENT MISSION
BY ME TO THE AREA WOULD TAKE ON A GREATER LOGIC.
ON THE DECLARATION I WOULD AVOID PRESSING FOR
A DECISION BY ISRAEL PREMATURELY BUT WOULD QUIETLY
EXPLAIN OUR REASONS FOR BELIEVING EVENTUAL ISRAELI
ACCEPTANCE OF OUR FORMULA WAS ESSENTIAL FOR
CONTINUANCE OF THE PEACE PROCESS. I WOULD ALSO SEEK
TO ENGAGE BOTH SIDES IN DISCUSSION OF THE GUIDELINES
FOR THE WEST BANK/GAZA. KNOWING WHAT IS INTENDED ON
THE DECLARATION, ALBEIT WITH A LONGER TIME FUSE
THAN THEY MIGHT HAVE WISHED, THE EGYPTIANS I
BELIEVE WOULD BE WILLING CAUTIOUSLY TO ENTER
INTO SUCH A DIALOGUE. THE ISRAELIS WOULD ALSO
BEGIN TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE IF FOR NO OTHER
REASON THAN THAT THE DEBATE ABOUT THE LANGUAGE
IN THE DECLARATION WOULD CAUSE THEM TO LOOK BEHIND
THE PALESTINIAN PARAGRAPH TO TRY TO ASCERTAIN
THE INTENTIONS OF THE OTHER SIDE IN MORE CONCRETE FASHION.

11. BEFORE RUSHING OUT FOR ANOTHER MISSION I WOULD ALSO
RECOMMEND THAT I DEVOTE SOME TIME EXPLAINING OUR
ACTION TO KEY CONGRESSMEN AND PERHAPS DO SOME PUBLIC
SPEAKING IN THE U.S. WITH THE SAME OBJECTIVE. THIS
SEEMS TO ME TO BE A VITAL PART OF THE STRATEGY
WE HAVE IN MIND.

12. FINALLY, IT IS WORTH REFLECTING ON THE
NATURE OF THE PROPOSAL WE WOULD BE PUTTING
FORWARD. IT WOULD BE ONE THING TO BE
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PROPOSING TO FACE THE ISRAELIS WITH A PROPOSITION
SO UNREASONABLE IN ISRAELI EYES THAT
OPPOSITION TO IT WOULD INSTANTLY MOBILIZE BOTH IN
ISRAEL AND IN THE U.S. CLEARLY THIS IS NOT
THE CASE WITH A DECLARATION USING THE ASWAN FORMULA.
IT IS EMINENTLY REASONABLE. IT WOULD STAND UP
WELL WITH U.S. PUBLIC OPINION, AS WILL OUR
POSITIONS ON APPLICABILITY OF 242 TO ALL FRONTS
AND ON SETTLEMENTS. I BELIEVE A SIGNIFICANT
BODY OF ISRAELI OPINION WOULD ALSO FIND WHAT
WE WOULD BE ASKING A NOT UNREASONABLE PRICE TO PAY
TO KEEP THE PEACE PROCESS ALIVE. IF THE INTERNAL

DABATE IN ISRAEL SETS IN MOTION TRENDS TOWARD NEW
POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS IN ISRAEL, THIS MAY NOT
BE A BAD THING. I AM PERSONALLY COMING INCREASINGLY
TO CONCLUSION THAT BEGIN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO LEAD
ISRAEL TO THE KIND OF BREAKTHROUGHS WE SEEK.

13. BOTH THE STRATEGY PAPER AND OUR RESPONSE OBVIOUSLY
CONTAIN CRUCIAL JUDGMENTS ON THE IMPACT OF OUR PROPOSED
STRATEGY ON BOTH THE EGYPTIANS AND THE ISRAELIS. IT
SEEMS TO ME DESIRABLE, THEREFORE, TO SEEK THE
SECRETARY'S AUTHORIZATION TO HAVE THIS
EXCHANGE OF MESSAGES REPEATED TO CAIRO AND TEL
AVIV AND TO INVITE THE COMMENTS OF AMBASSADORS
EILTS AND LEWIS. PICKERING
UNQUOTE VANCE

SECRET

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